Q&As for Supervisor Hearing – Supplemental

Parcel A

Q. How could you trust the Rad Scanner Van Survey when it said you have no problems on not only Parcel A but also Parcels B, C, D, and E. The report said, "Based on the scan results, none of the areas which were scanned warrant further radiological investigation." But then you later required a lot of rad cleanup work in all those other parcels. This survey must not be any good.

A. Historically, the majority of Parcel A was used for residences and administrative offices, not industrial activities. The radiological scanner van study was an extra step that gave EPA additional information about potential exposures for people above a paved road. Roads and other protective covers shield people from radiation. For other parcels, however, the history of the site did show potential concerns under a road surface. So for specific locations on other parcels, e.g. storm drain and sewer lines downstream of areas where radiological activities occurred, more investigation was still required before we could approve transfer.

Q. The Rad scanner van was "half blind." It only used a gamma scanner, so it will not detect some kinds of radiation, such as Strontium-90.

A. Historically, the majority of Parcel A was used for residences and administrative offices, not industrial activities. The radiological scanner van study was an extra step that gave EPA additional information. We would not expect Strontium-90, which emits beta radiation, not gamma radiation, to be present on Parcel A. The most prevalent radionuclides of concern at Hunters Point are gamma emitters. Gamma radiation has greater penetrating power than beta radiation.

Q. Even if the Cs-137 hits that Mr. Smith collected was not from Parcel A, it was at the bottom of the hill from Parcel A. So it could have washed down from a source at Parcel A. The Navy said to NBC news that would be from fallout, not from Navy activities. What do you think?

A. We cannot say what the source could be. We have no record of Navy activities that would be associated with Parcel A. So we would not expect Cs-137 from Navy activities on Parcel A to be a source. By contrast, we do have historical record of Navy associated Cs-137 presence in other locations on the Shipyard, e.g. Parcel G. So that is why we have concerns about Cs-137 in other locations and require testing elsewhere. It is true that some studies have shown nationwide that Cs-137 concentrations associated with fallout could be similar to the levels Mr. Smith remembers hearing about. However, we cannot say what the source could be.

Q. Prof. Tim Jorgenson said that the Cs-137 that Mr. Smith saw is probably from sandblast grit.

A. The sandblast grit found on Parcel A was tested for radiation associated with Operation Crossroad ships. It was also tested for the types of naturally occurring radionuclides typical for this type of grit. Results showed no radiological hazard. The sandblast grit was removed.

Q. Bert Bowers said he found elevated Radium-226 levels inside a manhole at Parcel A. Shouldn't I be worried?

A. We have received new allegations about potential concerns on Parcel A. We have asked to speak to the individuals with information through their attorney. When we receive more detailed information, we will evaluate it, consult with our regulatory partners and other stakeholders, and work together to recommend a course of action. In addition, the historic records show that all sediment in Parcel A storm drain and sewer system lines were removed in 1994 and 1995. We are continuing to research this allegation.

Q. You said you will revisit the Parcel A process. Do you have doubts about it?

A. No, but I want to provide the public with facts so that you can have confidence in the process based on your own review.

Q. I thought that the developer moved all the soil around on Parcel A. Would that mean it spread the radiation around?

A. We would have no reason to expect that the original soil at Parcel A had radiological contamination related to Navy activities. So even though soil was moved around for the development, that should not make any difference.

Timeline

Q. Can we move forward more quickly now? Do you and the Navy agree on everything now?

A. We agree with the Navy that it critical to go out in the field as soon as possible. We have had some disagreements. One of these is obviously the percent of locations with potential signs of questionable data. But we have worked together and made a lot of progress. We support the Navy's decision to retest 100% of the locations where Tetra Tech EC Inc. has done previous work.

We have been discussing the testing approach frequently and have worked through many details. The Navy has announced that it will release a draft sitewide general workplan and a Parcel G Task Specific Workplan to the regulators and the public at the same time. We have provided them with a lot of input in advance. We will obviously be looking with interest at that draft, which we haven't seen. And we will make comments as appropriate, just as you will.

Q. On 5/11, NBC news reported that Supervisor Cohen said the Navy is not taking action quickly enough on Tetra Tech and CDPH should take over the Tetra Tech investigation. What do you think?

A. We work in partnership with the CDPH and other regulatory partners. Stepping back, for decades, the roles at Hunters Point are similar to those for other military sites nationwide: the Department of Defense is the lead on the cleanup, and the regulatory agencies, including the State CDPH, oversee their work to make sure that they are complying with Superfund and other environmental requirements. The Navy and regulators signed a Federal Facilities Agreement in 1991. We are working through our perspectives diligently in good faith and making progress. Should we reach an impasse, that Federal Facilities Agreement includes a dispute resolution process that resolves disagreements through a defined set of steps to move forward.

Path Forward

Q. **How could you allow less than 100% full excavation for retesting?**

A. If we find contamination, then right away, then we will require 100% excavation at Parcel G.

Q. **How could you make secret deals behind closed doors to leave 2/3 of the Shipyard untested?**

A. The normal community involvement process for Superfund is that public comments are usually invited on draft plans only after the Navy has addressed comments from regulatory agencies. The Navy has announced that it will invite public comment on the draft sitewide general workplan and the Parcel G Task Specific Plan at the same time as regulators receive it for review. That is unusual.

Other

Q. Did EPA do its own testing for radiation?

A. USEPA's Superfund radiation technical support staff has conducted numerous radiation surveys using handheld radiation detecting instruments. For example, USEPA conducted independent soil analyses and determined that low-level radiation in soils located on the former subbase portion of Parcel B was attributable to naturally occurring radionuclides, not contamination. USEPA also conducted an analysis of the soil surrounding buried radioluminescent dials, gauges and deck markers on Parcel E and confirmed that the radium painted devices could be effectively separated and removed from soils. USEPA also recommended treatment technologies to the Navy to remove buried radium painted devices from Parcel E soils.

Q. How close does radiation have to be to hurt you?

A. Different types of radiation travel different distances and can be shielded in different ways. The most prevalent radionuclide on the Shipyard is Radium-226, which is a health concern due to gamma radiation. Gamma rays are able to travel hundreds of meters through air. However, they can be stopped by shielding such as a thick concrete wall, a concrete foundation, soil, or asphalt.